

THE NICKEL

A True Story of Adventures on the Great Plains in '80.

By R. W. Thomson.

There sits in my office while I write a veteran prospector and miner, Daniel Evans by name, who, now in his 70th year, is still as alert and active as most men of 50.

"Uncle Dan," as everyone calls him, is an intelligent and fairly well educated man, quite unlike what many people suppose the pioneers of western travel to be. He forges a wandering life more than a quarter century ago, married and settled down in Michigan to enjoy his well earned competence.

Having myself been for many years a Californian and Australian gold-digger, Dan's reminiscences of those times greatly interested me; as I trust his last told story may do my readers. I give it, nearly as possible in his own words, promising that during the whole narrative he never, for himself or others, used the uncoined dialect which some imaginative writers are fond of ascribing to all the early Californian gold-seekers, whereas, as a matter of fact, only the uneducated and ruder class of those men used such a dialect.

On the 13th of July, 1850, when I was a young fellow of 20, I embarked on a schooner consisting of four "prairie schooners" and thirty men, besides our guide, old Bill Somers, reached the western part of Arizona without having the least idea of what we were to do.

Early that morning we crossed the Big Sandy, eight or ten miles above its junction with the Santa Maria, and a little south of the Hualapai mountains. A certain trail through the foothills of which we designed to take. This route, of Bill's own choosing, lay far to the south of that usually followed. Hence we found no trail—whichever mark nor footprint to guide us; but, as Somers felt confident of finding the desired short-cut, we did not trouble ourselves about this matter.

On coming to the foothills, however, and inspecting several ravines in succession, he declared all to be impracticable. "But," said Tom Granger, our captain, "I know there's a path hereabouts. I'll cut through it alone in '45, and I'm bound to hit it off. Keep your train where it is, Tom, while I go ahead and climb one of those cottonwoods, to look around a bit. I'll be back in half an hour sure."

So, leaving his horse and rifle behind, the guide set off on his solitary quest, among the quaking asp bushes at the foot of a mountain spur.

We all watched the tall cottonwood tree growing higher and higher every moment to see him shining up one of them, but we never did.

"It's mighty queer," at last grumbled Tom Granger. "What on earth can keep the old man up there?"

"Oh, he'll be back directly," said one of us. "Likely he's found a pass that looks about right and is tracing out, to make sure. He's not enough of us to have heard a shot or two from his revolver."

Now, since entering Arizona, we'd had two ugly scrimmages in such fashion, but we hadn't seen one, nor an Indian of any kind, for the last week, we couldn't think of any possible harm happening to our friend. And there we were—loafing around and doing nothing.

With the exception of Abe Johnson, a 45-year-old Kentuckian, we were all young men, knowing only so much of Indian ways as we had learned on our present journey; but Abe had served both in the Seminoles and Mexican wars, and was pretty well posted in regard to the "arming" of Indians.

When first of our party, who had been elected him to the captaincy, an honor which he modestly declined, saying that the young giant, Tom Granger, was far more fit for it than he.

"Well, when 10 o'clock had come, without a sign of Somers, Abe began to suspect mischief. "Stay right here, boys," he said, "I'll make a little scout." And off he went in the direction previously taken by the guide.

We saw him at intervals and again lost sight of him, exactly as we had done with Bill; but, unlike the latter, he came safely back in thirty minutes or so, looking much distressed.

"He's quietly said, 'You want to know what about and form a corral out on the open plain, forty rods clear of cover. Poor Bill in the hands of the Indians, sure. The varmints have sneaked up and lassoed him, or struck him down before he could pull trigger or give the alarm. I saw the trail where they had hauled him 'way down into a pass he'd found, and they're hiding in there waiting for us to come along.'"

"Do you think they've killed Somers?" asked Granger.

"No, cap, I don't believe he's hurt a mite, for I didn't see a drop of blood anywhere," replied Abe. "The reds have likely choked him senseless and dragged him off to be tortured to death. And, boys, we've got to rescue him before sundown, for when those devils see that we're not going to fall into the trap, they'll begin their hellish work just at that time."

"We'll do that, or die," savagely exclaimed one of our men. "How many of the braves are there, Abe, and how far off?"

"Can't say; maybe twenty—no more than a hundred, but, judging by the signs, no more than half a dozen tackled Bill. I don't know where the main crowd is located, but it's sure to be near the narrowest and busiest part of the pass."

"Abe," said Tom Granger, "you'd better take command of the party till this thing's settled; and I'll be full private. I want a chance to fight without being hindered giving orders, besides you know what ought to be done, and I don't."

All of us assented Tom's request, and the old soldier finally consented to the arrangement.

While this talk went on we'd moved away from the foothills, and on reaching a little creek in the vicinity where there was not a tree, shrub or rock to shelter an enemy, we corralled the wagons, tethered the horses out to feed and got our own dinner.

Then Johnson said, "Boys, wait nineteen volunteers besides myself for this job." Every man of us jumped up on the instant, and Abe smilingly continued: "Well, since you all want to go, we'll draw lots, so as to give every one an equal chance. I'll get twenty-nine numbered tickets in my hat, shake 'em up, and the fellows that draw the first ten will go with me. The other ten must stay to guard the camp."

"All right. That's fair enough. Go ahead, Abe," we all agreed. And the little pieces of pasteboard, cut from an old book cover, were placed in the hat, each man examining his eyes, afterward withdrawing same. Both Tom

Granger and I were among the lucky nineteen, and the disappointed ten submitted gratefully. In addition to his muzzle-loading rifle, each one of us carried a heavy Colt's revolver—a mighty costly weapon at that time—so twenty of us could fire in all 140 shots without reloading.

"Friends," thoughtfully observed our new captain, "of course the redskins have scouts out watching us. They've marked our course of position and will reckon on our staying right here and eating the stock, about daybreak tomorrow morning. If we were fools enough to do that not a man would ever come back. Then they'd try to wipe out the remnant and capture the stock, about daybreak tomorrow morning. If we don't see us make a move, all the warriors ambushed in this end of the pass will fall back on the main body before sundown, and not one of the band will ever think of being attacked from the further end of the gorge."

"Now, here's my plan: The bank of this creek is high enough to hide us completely, and we'll sneak along its bed till we get to the timber this side of the Big Sandy. Then we'll work our way round the spurs to the west of the pass and take the trail that I'll be twice or five-mile tramp, I reckon; but nothing else can save Bill Somers."

"Do you think we can get there in time, Abe?"

"Easy enough, Dan," he replied. "There's seven hours of daylight left. The way we're going, though impassable for wagons, will be a trifle easier for us. We'll start at once, and we ought to reach the far end of the pass in four hours. That'll leave us three

hours to creep up on the reds. They can't be any great distance from the west opening, but we'll have to crawl like snakes for the last half mile or so. There is sure to be a good cover though, and if we get there before sunset we'll save Bill, even if there's a hundred of the murdering varmints. So, stick to me, and don't let me hear of any more of those 'pistol-packing' fellows. Make a bonfire of all the weapons, boys; then we'll mount a pony apiece, lead our spare ones to the west, and push right through the pass to camp."

"I ain't more than two miles away, and we'll make it before I gets real dark. Of course, the reds be watching us, and that's the best of the joke, for they can't meddle with us, and the sight'll be worse than poison to them. Tomorrow we'll come through here with our whole train just as safely as along a St. Louis street, and in ten days we'll strike the Big Colorado all right."

The ten men left at the corral had heard the firing and were extremely anxious about us. When, therefore, we arrived, with the rescued guide, the string of ponies and outfit, they were all glad to see us, and that the rest of the party was safe, there was a perfect jubilee of rejoicing.

On passing through the defile next day, not a dead warrior was to be seen, and that had been removed during the night; nor did the remainder of our journey see a single hostile Indian. Best of all, while making our way to the town of San Francisco, we sold the whole herd of captured ponies at a good price.

"What ultimately became of Bill Somers?" you know, Uncle Dan?" inquired one of our men.

"Oh, yes," replied the veteran, "he made a nice little pile, lived to be over 80 and died peacefully in his bed at St. Louis about twenty years ago."

As I look from the lole, o'er his billows of green, To the billows of foam-crested blue, You bark that afar in the distance is seen, Half-dreaming me eyes will pursue; Now dark in the water, the scatters the spray.

As the chaff in the stroke of the flail; Now white as the sea gull she glides on her way, The sun gleaming bright on her sail.

Yet her pilot is thinking of dangers to breakers that whiten and roar; How little he cares, if in sand or in sun He looks to the beacon that booms from the shore.

To the rock that is under his lee, As he drifts on the blast, like a wind-wafted gull, O'er the gulfs of the desolate sea.

Thus drifting afar to the dim-vaunted caves Where life and its ventures are laid, The dreamers who venture to battle the waves May see us in sunshine or shade; Yet true to our course, though the shadows grow dark, And stand by the rudder that governs the bark, Nor ask how we look from the shore!

The vicar of Pontrevert recently preached at a cyclist church parade, taking for his text "The Spirit of the Living Creature is in the Wheel." In a first-class church a new stove was put in on the following Sunday the text given was: "Aha! I am Warm; I have Seen the Fire," and when the sexton gave the benediction, the women of the congregation selected as his text "Solomon in All His Glory Was Not Arrayed Like One of These."

"I see," said Mrs. Wickwire, "that a Chicago preacher had been preaching a sermon on boarding houses, and he said: 'Dear Madam: I hope this finds you as well as it leaves me. The ship is in the middle of the Red Sea and it is fearfully hot. I am in a terrible state of mind, and I don't know what to do. I am sure you will be pleased to hear that I am still a member of the Church of England.'"

A girl migrant writes back to the lady who has helped her as follows: "Dear Madam: I hope this finds you as well as it leaves me. The ship is in the middle of the Red Sea and it is fearfully hot. I am in a terrible state of mind, and I don't know what to do. I am sure you will be pleased to hear that I am still a member of the Church of England."

In a suburban Boston pulpit last Sunday morning this notice was read: "The pastor will preach his last sermon this evening, and the choir has arranged a special praise service for the occasion."

Never was surprise more complete or victory more instantaneous. The four conspicuously tall warriors, the two excruciatingly burly others, and the two who were not so tall, were all looking at each other with a look of intense interest.

While the main body of savages, yelling and dancing in hellish delight, formed a great ring around their victim, two braves approached the man who had taken a place of dry twigs and the other a light brand.

The circle was just opening to let them in when the tramp of doom, their hands rang out from the lips of our leader the single word, "Now!"

'Twas the last earthly sound heard by nearly a score of Indians, and the next moment a hail of birodthright Arapahoe, for a rifle's bullet flies faster than its report, over so short a space, and those who fell dead on the firing of our simultaneous volleys heard only the sound of nothing.

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THE ICE CARNIVAL AT QUEBEC

Thrilling Assault on the Crystal Fortress—Description of Various Winter Sports—Gayety and Buoyancy a National Trait.

Our first winter in Canada! What a medley of memories it brings up—new experiences of many kinds, a new home, new friends, new work, and all associated with bright skies, an ever-glimmering scene of snow and ice, and antics of eager-faced youths and maidens intent on some one or other of the sports which have made Canadian winters so famous!

"But the cold? Do you not feel the cold very severely?" I heard some one ask. Well, to that question I can reply with no uncertain sound. The cold may be severe, the thermometer falling once or twice during last winter to 25 degrees and 20 degrees below zero at night in Government House gardens; but the fact remains that one does not feel it more cold than, if so cold as, at home. It is of a different quality, and our coachman, whose opinion may be considered impartial, as he has frequently to bear night exposure, says he often felt more chilly when driving on a winter night in Aberdeen-shire than in the same way in Canada.

Only let them come clad in the warmest of their winter wraps, and they will be as well as in Canada, and ready to adopt some simple precautions to preserve ears and fingers and toes from frost bites. There is a long list of articles which are necessary for winter wear; it is, in fact, an adaptation of the hankering worn by the Indians, and has been improved upon by the modern tobogganers. But we are disposed to think that it is not sufficiently appreciated or worn by the general public. We think that the members of the Government House staff never look so well as when they turn out in their dark blue blanket suits piped with gold, and the old cutaway coat, which never looks so well as when they turn out in their dark blue blanket suits piped with gold, and the old cutaway coat, which never looks so well as when they turn out in their dark blue blanket suits piped with gold.

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WINTER LIFE IN CANADA WITH THE MERCURY BELOW ZERO.

THE ICE CARNIVAL AT QUEBEC

Winter life in Canada with the Mercury below zero. The ice carnival at Quebec. Description of various winter sports, gayety and buoyancy a national trait.

There is another Canadian winter amusement which is seen at its best at Toronto and Kingston, but of which, as yet, we have only had a brief experience. But the sensation which it affords is so novel and so different from anything else that it must be felt to be understood. The boat is made in the shape of a large triangle, surmounted with sails; the passengers take their seats in the hull, and the helmsman takes up his position, and away he goes, skidding along at the rate sometimes of a mile a minute. It is as if a great wheel were being turned, and the helmsman takes up his position, and away he goes, skidding along at the rate sometimes of a mile a minute.

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THE OLD, OLD WISH

James Whitcomb Riley.

Last night, in some lost mood of meditation, The while my dreamy vision ranged the Unfathomable arches of creation, I saw a falling star.

And as my eyes swept round the path it smothered, I thought of long ago, With the swift, dying glory of its glow, With sudden intuition I remembered A wish that, were it made—so ran the fancy Of credulous young lover and of lass— As fell a star, by some strange necromancer, Would surely come to pass.

And, of itself, the wish, reiterated, A thousand times in vision, flashed o'er my mind, And, as I star, as soon obliterated, Dropped into night again.

For my old heart had wished for the unending, For a little maid of nine— And that the girl heart, with the woman's bending, Would wish for ever mine.

And so it was, with eyelids raised, and with a heart that yearned for love, I thought of long ago, With the swift, dying glory of its glow, With sudden intuition I remembered A wish that, were it made—so ran the fancy Of cred